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On Two Wheels



THE INSIDE STORY OF MOTOR CYCLING

On Two Wheels

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NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

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Montesa Cota 348 – *Mike Winfield*. We take a look at one of the best trials machines available today.

Monthéry – *Cyril Posthumus*. This French circuit was once a major centre of racing and record breaking.

Monza – *Christopher James*. Italy's famous high-speed road racing circuit with a tragic history.

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Moped – *Doug Jackson*. The history of the moped goes back a lot further than you might imagine.

Morbidelli – *Steve Harvey*. The newest and most promising of Italy's Grand Prix road-racing machine manufacturers.

This week's contributors

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Picture acknowledgments

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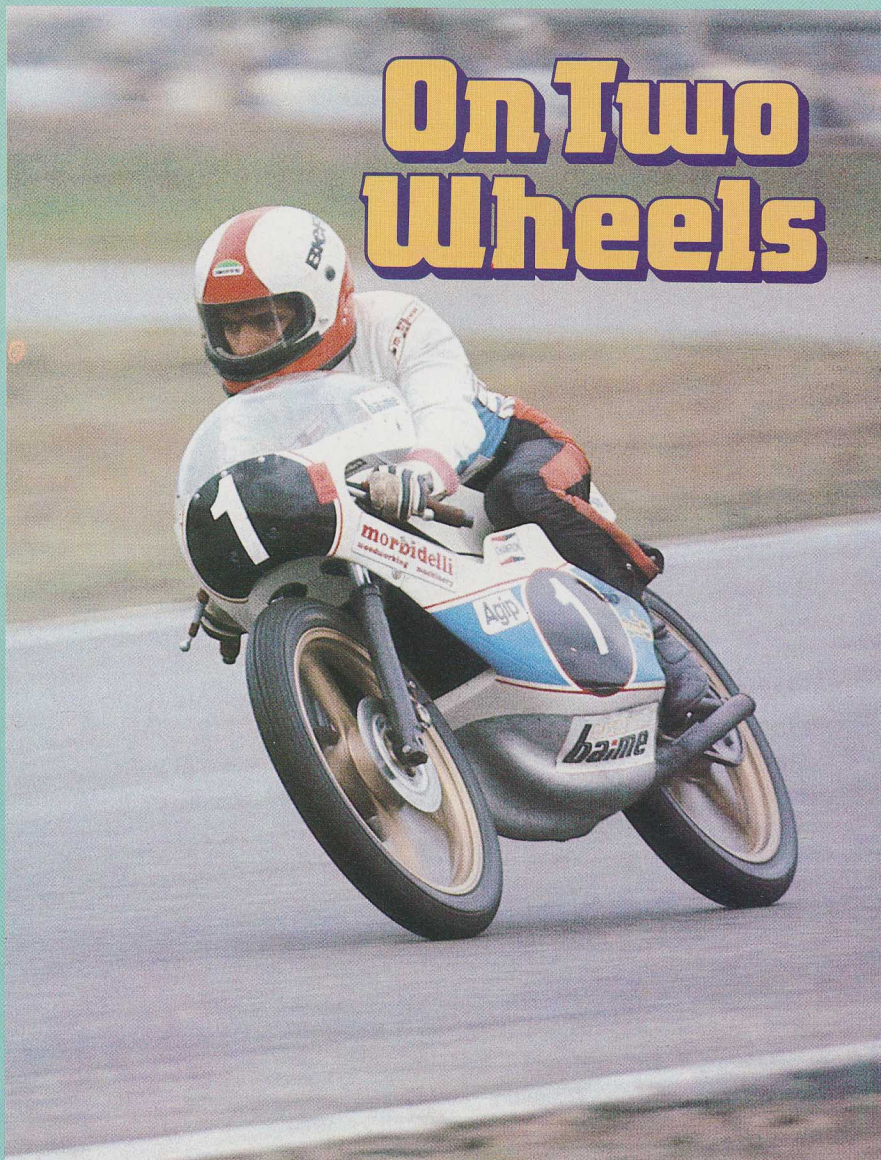
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As Sweden is a country of such rugged terrain, it is not surprising that motor cycle development in that country has been focused to a great extent on off-road machinery. Monark, one of Sweden's major motor cycle concerns, has since its conception channelled a great deal of its development attentions into a series of highly successful motocross and ISDT machines. Its motocross machines have twice captured the 500cc World Championship and, together with fellow Swedes, Husqvarna, the factory played its part in the Swedish domination of international motocross during the early 1960s.

The man responsible for the development of Monark's off-road competition bikes, through the 1960s and into the '70s was Ove Lundell. A member of the victorious Swedish Motocross des Nations teams of 1958 and 1961, Lundell's wealth of experience stood him in good stead when he was given complete control over Monark's competition strategy. The bikes he saw into production were as uncompromising as his riding style and were built with the expert rider very much in mind.

One such 'no nonsense' motor cycle was the much acclaimed 125cc ISDT Replica of 1975. This machine was constructed for just one purpose, that of winning gold medals in International Six Days Trials. With its 123cc Sachs single-cylinder, two-stroke engine pumping out around 18bhp, it was only ever really happy when being ridden flat out over rough country.

Although Monark have over the years built a number of very fine machines, most of the component parts – as in the case of the ISDT Replica – have been produced by outside contractors. The Vanberg-based company has always used other manufacturer's engines to power its bikes; the main contribution to the success of its machinery being in frame design and the excellent standard of workmanship which has always accompanied its name. It is worth mentioning that this name has not always been Monark, for when the company was founded in 1920 the first motor cycles off the production line bore the title Esse.

It is difficult to say what is in a name but after changing from Esse to Monark, the company certainly gained more success than had previously been the case. This, however, was probably due to the fact that the name change coincided with the introduction of a new model range rather than to any feeling of excellence that the name Monark engenders.

When called Esse, the company built and marketed just the one model. This, in common with most other manufacturer's first attempts at motor cycle production, was a motorised bicycle. It



Kings of the Rough

had a 172cc single-cylinder, two-stroke engine and chain drive. The Vanberg factory produced this model for five years but, with the coming of the name Monark, it introduced a whole new range of bikes. All fitted with single-cylinder, side-valve or overhead-valve engines, the Monarks ranged in capacity from 250 to 600cc.

For the next decade Monark experimented with a number of proprietary engines in its own frames but in 1936, with the abandonment of some of the larger capacity models, the company formed a liaison with the German company, Ilo. The Ilo factory supplied Monark with small two-stroke units and around these the factory formed its development strategy. It was, however, to be a short lived alliance for, with the coming of World War II, the supply of

Ilo units dried up and Monark had to look inside Sweden for suitable engines. Here, near neighbours Husqvarna came to the rescue with a 500cc single-cylinder, four-stroke unit; this being utilised in Monark's highly successful M42 model of 1943.

After World War II, Monark returned its attention to the manufacture of lightweight motor cycles, and in these early post-war models a variety of engines were used. These ranged from 48 to 249cc and included such famous marques as BSA, Ilo, CZ, Adler and the Swedish JB.

Above: the first of the Monarks was built in 1920 but was known as an Esse. It was little more than a motorised bicycle and was powered by a single-cylinder, two-stroke engine of 172cc



Left: A. Hellberg's 125cc Monark on its way to winning a Silver Medal in the 1975 ISDT event

Right: a Monark Formula 50; it used a 6.5bhp Morini engine. They were built for a special race series organised specially by Monark. The bike was fitted with a five-speed gearbox

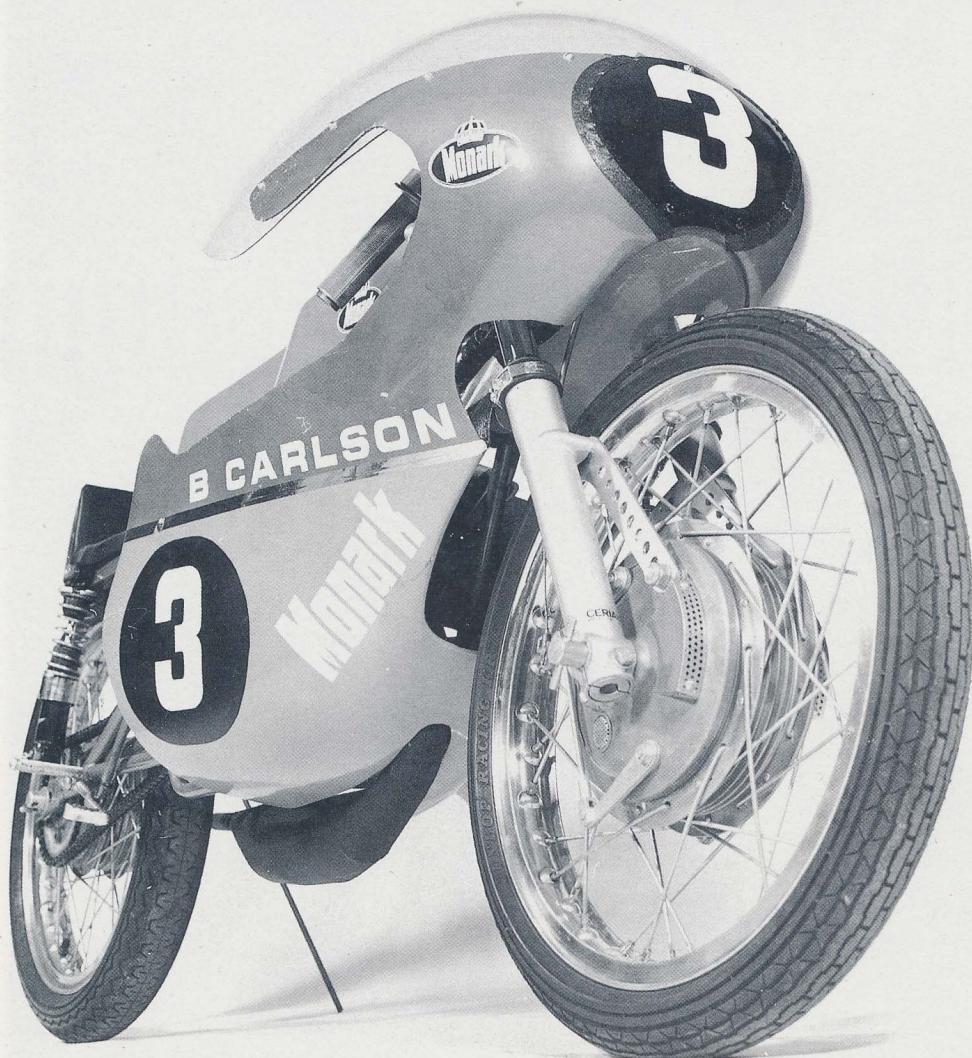
Below left: a 125cc Monark road racer of 1973. It used a Sachs engine which developed 28bhp at 12,500rpm

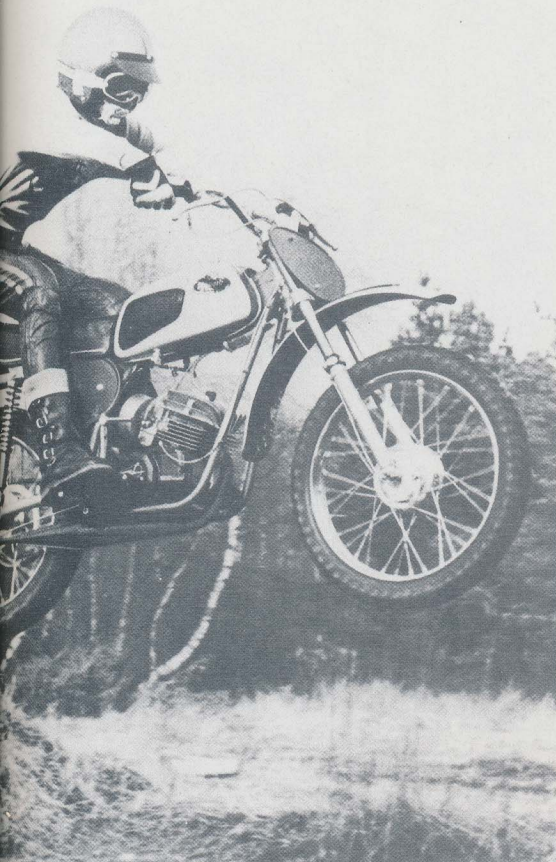
Below right: a Monark ISDT Replica machine of 1973. It was powered by an air-cooled two-stroke 123cc Sachs engine

Since the late 1940s, Monark has concentrated most of its development attentions into competition motor cycles; this is not to say, however, that it has totally neglected road-going machinery. The post-World War II years have seen some fine Monark road bikes, including the Blue Fighter of the mid 1950s and the TS and TTS of the 1970s. The first Blue Fighter left the Vanberg factory in 1952 and with its 150cc Ilo single-cylinder, two-stroke unit it proved to be the backbone of the company's success into the 1960s. Not only did this machine prove to be extremely popular within Sweden but it also led indirectly to Monark's first major ISDT success. It was the Blue Arrow, a 250cc twin-cylinder derivative of the Blue Fighter, which took the Swedish team to gold medals in the 1954 International Six Days Trial, which was held in Wales.

At the start of the 1970s, Monark introduced a pair of very attractive lightweight machines, the TS and TTS. Considering its capacity, the latter of these two models, with its super efficient Sachs two-stroke engine, was an extremely good performer. Both bikes were built to Monark's traditionally high standards and came equipped with Ceriani forks and Girling rear dampers.

Because of their location, the rivalry between Monark and Husqvarna in international motocross has traditionally always been strong. This competitive spirit was never fiercer than between the years of 1959 and 1963, when the two factories, due to their superiority over foreign opposition, became locked in battle for the 500cc World Motocross Championship. At the end of the five-year period, the world title score finished three two in favour of Husqvarna. Monark's star rider of the time was Sten Lundin, a rider of exceptional physical stamina as well as courage, who lifted the championship for the Vanberg factory in 1959 and 1961; being beaten narrowly in the other two years, first by Bill Nilsson and then twice by the legendary Rolf Tibblin.





In the early 1960s, Sweden seemed to have a never ending supply of top class motocross riders, including not only the afore mentioned but also such famous names as Lundell, Johansson and Gustafsson. Swedish bikes and riders became almost unbeatable in international competition and, with an eye to maintaining this superiority, the Swedish Motor Cycle Federation set up a series of school-boy scrambling events. Here Monark co-operated to the full and produced a range of custom built 50cc bikes for the younger rider. Giving a choice of Sachs or Morini engines, the mini motocrossers were fitted with Bosch flywheel magneto ignition and Motoplat Thyristor external coils – which kept the engine supplied with a constant spark even when running under water or thick mud. By the early 1970s the company was producing these machines by the hundred and by the law of averages was playing its part in ensuring Sweden a constant supply of world class motocross talent.

The year 1971 saw Monark make a brief venture into the 50cc and 500cc classes of road racing. The senior of the bikes was powered, surprisingly, by an engine derived from a competition power boat unit. However, it never gained the same success as the 50cc racer which, ridden by L. Persson, won the Swedish Championship at its first attempt.

Although it has never built a complete machine from home produced components, Monark, who are part of the Swedish MCB Group, have over the years invariably found the right blend for its highly successful motor cycles. Never was this better demonstrated than in the 175 Enduro of 1976. With its stoved enamelled blue and yellow paintwork – patriotic colours which have always predominated on the bikes from Vanberg – the Enduro was a perfect blend of power and flexibility. Its 171cc light alloy single-cylinder Sachs two-stroke unit, fitted with a central Bing 30mm carburettor, produced its power in a manner that would satisfy the most demanding of riders.

Monark has never exported bikes in any great numbers. It has, in the past, seemed content to continue as a small tight knit concern, producing highly specialised and beautifully constructed motor cycles. This is what the company does best and is perhaps where it rightly sees its future. Stories abound from motor cycle importers, the world over, who have found their dealing with Monark being conducted in a somewhat off-hand manner. However, a rider of one of these superb machines, who finds himself faced with a particularly rough tract of country, will readily tell you that he is truly . . . Monark of all he surveys. AW

